

U.S. Military Academy - Cullum Memorial Hall
(Memorial Hall)
On Cullum Road at the eastern edge of the Plain
U.S. Military Academy
West Point
Orange County
New York

HABS No. NY-5708-42

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
U.S. MILITARY ACADEMY - CULLUM MEMORIAL HALL
(MEMORIAL HALL)

LOCATION: On Cullum Road at the eastern edge of the Plain, across from Doubleday Field, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, Orange County, New York.

USGS West Point Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator
Coordinates: 18.587420.4582600.

PRESENT OWNER
AND OCCUPANT: U.S. Military Academy, Department of the Army.

PRESENT USE: Activity hall, Offices of the Alumni Affairs and the Association of Graduates.

SIGNIFICANCE: Cullum Hall is associated with Brevet Major General George W. Cullum, its founder, and with McKim, Mead and White, its architects. The building represents a short lived period of American Renaissance classicism at West Point at the turn of the century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1896 - 1899. The cornerstone was laid April 15, 1896 and the building completed December 21, 1898 (Forman and Weiss, "Brief Chronological History of the United States Military Academy 1802 - 1976," Cullum Memorial Addition of Cadets, U.S.M.A. 1977, p. 20.) The 1898 Annual Report notes that the building was finished except for the interior decoration. The 1900 Annual Report notes that the building received furniture that year and was dedicated on June 12, 1900.
2. Architect: McKim, Mead and White, Architects, 160 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York. A letter from Superintendent O. H. Ernst to the Adjutant General dated September 25, 1893 states that the Board of Trustees of the Memorial Hall had selected McKim, Mead and White to design the building (Superintendent's Letter Book No. 7, item No. 108, U.S.M.A. Archives). McKim, Mead and White also designed the Battle Monument at Trophy Point, completed in 1894 and the Officer's Mess and Quarters, just south of Cullum Hall, completed in 1903.
3. Original and subsequent owners: U.S. Military Academy, Department of the Army.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The Probst Construction Company, New York was the general contractor; the George Williams Company provided the light fixtures; Nicholson and Galloway provided unidentified copper work in 1903; and the building had Columbian fireproofing. The original specifications for Blue Hill Granite (Maine) were changed to Pink Milford Granite. In 1899 McKim, Mead and White were asked to give up the job of furnishing the Hall. John Wanamaker is listed as a furniture supplier in the 1900 Annual Report.

5. Original plans and construction: Superintendent Ernst mentions that plans for the building were received in November 1894 and that specifications were received in February 1895. Proposals were received for construction in May 1895. In April 1896 Chauncy M. Sprague was appointed superintendent of construction (Superintendent's Letter Books Nos. 9 - 10). Original and subsequent drawings exist and are in the Office of the Facilities Engineer, Directorate of Engineering and Housing, U.S.M.A.
6. Alterations and additions: The principal memorial spaces of the first and second floors remain relatively unaltered. The greatest alterations have occurred in the basement and sub-basement where individual bedrooms were converted into double rooms and later altered into offices for Alumni Affairs and the Association of Graduates. The majority of other alterations came in 1976 with improved fire safety changes, including the enclosure of the south staircase and the creation of a new south doorway.

Datable alterations of consequence include the following: Sub-Basement: 1954 and 1960 bedrooms converted into offices; elevator installed, 1966; passage doorway created, 1966; fire escape added to north elevation and new window cut-out, 1976; removal of a staircase and elevator, 1976; and the construction of exterior stairs on the east, 1976.

Basement: Conversion of bedrooms into offices, 1960; enclosure of the stairhall, 1966; removal of two metal spiral staircases, 1976; removal of an elevator and two dumbwaiters, 1976; staircase added on the west, 1976; and a doorway created in the 1954 living room wall.

First Floor: alterations to the men's and women's toilets, 1934 and 1936; alterations to the pantry, 1954; north window blocked for Pershing portrait, 1951; new lamp globes, 1956; enclosure of the stairhall 1966; removal of a metal spiral staircase and an elevator on the east, 1976; removal of a metal spiral staircase and two dumbwaiters on the west, 1976; construction of new staircases on the east and west; doors and walls removed or added to the pantry area and south end, 1976; enclosure of the passage, 1976; and the creation of a new south entrance doorway, 1976.

Second Floor: removal of a wooden staircase, metal spiral staircase and two dumbwaiters (west only) on the east and west, 1976; construction of new staircases on the east and west, 1976; doorways blocked on each side of the stage, 1976; a new spiral staircase and partition wall on stage, 1976; and the removal of door and the widening of doorways flanking the stage, 1976.

Gallery: enclosure of the staircase and balcony with wire glass, 1976.

Exterior: masonry terraces replaced with quarry tile, 1973; sheet metal roof (which had earlier replaced a barrel tile roof) replaced with "terneplate" sheet metal, 1978.

B. Historical Context:

Major General George W. Cullum, class of 1833, Captain of Engineers, U.S.M.A. from 1848-1855, and Superintendent 1864-1866, died in 1892 and left \$250,000 "for the erection of a memorial hall, the purchase of statues, busts, portraits of distinguished deceased officers and graduates and the continuation of the publication of General Cullum's biographical register of graduates." (Annual Report, 1892. This report states that Cullum left \$300,000, but a Board of Visitors Report of 1894 and Cullum's will state that it was \$250,000.) Cullum was instrumental in the Association of Graduates that was formed in 1869 with Sylvannus Thayer as its president. In 1872 the presidency passed to Cullum and to Charles Davies. Cullum had, with Thayer's help, begun a biographical register of alumni. This became General Cullum's Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the United States Military Academy. Historian Thomas Fleming described Cullum as one of West Point's first serious historians. For a general relationship of Cullum Hall to the Academy, see HABS No. NY-5708, Volume 2: "West Point: An Overview of the History and Physical Development of the United States Military Academy."

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Cullum Hall is the most architecturally significant of McKim, Mead and White's three works at West Point. Its American Renaissance classicism is rare among the Academy's neo-gothic designs and its largely unaltered interior and exterior details make it significant as a fine example of national architectural significance.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The building is rectangular, approximately 143' x 66' and has a five bay facade. There are two principal floors, a gallery and two basement floors.
2. Foundations: Foundation walls are a gray granite laid in a random range ashlar pattern. They vary in thickness: 2'-4" on the east, 2'-4" - 3'-10" on the north and south; 6'-10" - 8'-4" on the west; and 1'-4" for most interior walls. The watertable or plinth is 3'-6" high on the west elevation. On the west the foundation reaches 27'-4" below grade. Due to the falling grade on the edge of the Plain, the foundation walls are only visible on the north, south and east elevations, the east being the highest.
3. Walls: Above the foundation the walls are a lighter granite, smooth-faced and laid in an ashlar pattern. This same granite is used in the foundations

only at the corners as quoins, which contrasts with the darker, rougher granite of the lower walls. The walls are richly molded and decorated with plinths, moldings, four enlarged colossal order Ionic columns, pilasters, aedicule doorways and entablatures.

4. Structural systems, framing: Structural systems are load-bearing stone and brick walls, concrete slabs with encased I-beams and steel truss room framing. Original working drawings should be consulted for structural details.
5. Porches, stoops, balconies: The west elevation, having its first floor level with the grade of the Plain, has an entrance stoop of five low granite steps flanked by granite blocks supporting memorial cannon. A quarry tile terrace surrounds the building on its north, south and east sides. A granite wall and iron balustrade is associated with this terrace. The terrace is the widest on the east where it overlooks the Hudson River and forms part of a loggia/patio dining area with tables and chairs. The 14'-6" high loggia is formed by a full height pilastrade.
6. Chimneys: Two granite chimneys are located on the east edge of the roof, aligned with the pilasters flanking the loggia.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The ground floor was originally entered through four exterior doorways: the facade entrance, one opposite in the loggia and one on each end of the loggia. To these are now added a south doorway and two on the east side of the Pershing Room which lead onto the loggia.

The principal doorway is an aedicula with two metal doors (bronze?) and a decorative six panel transom window grille. The doors and frame are heavily molded.

The principal east entrance doorway is a bi-valve wooden door consisting of a square clathri window above two panels.

The end loggia doors are solid while the newer Pershing Room doors have an upper quarrel pane glazing and a diagonal cross-brace lower panel.

The new south doors are metal and reproduce a clathri grille. The triple window transom over this door is original, having once been part of the window.

Two basement doors on the east and south are wooden with a clathri window. The sub-basement door on the east is new and of no significance.

- b. Windows: Cullum Hall's fenestration can be roughly grouped into the more decorative first and second floor windows and the more functional windows of the two basement floors. Those of the upper floors are over eight feet in height and are covered by wooden clathri grilles; the exception are the east floor windows in the loggia. The second floor windows are at the upper level of the memorial hall, serving as clerestory windows; these are in groups of three divided by granite piers which form a colonnade. The lower stories have individual wooden casement windows measuring 4'-4" high. Wire screens cover many of these lower windows.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The roof is hipped and covered with standing seam copper or "terneplate sheet metal." This second generation metal roof was installed in 1978.
- b. Cornice: The granite colossal order Ionic entablature is 7'-6" high consisting of a 2'-8" architrave, a 2'-6" frieze and a 2'-4" cornice. The frieze on the facade is inscribed. On all elevations the cymatium has lion's heads. Antefix and acroterion are found on the facade only.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plans: The sub-basement and basement floors are a series of small peripheral rooms (9' high) arranged around a core of three mechanical spaces which rise the height of both floors 20'4"). The principal rooms on the first floor are Pershing Hall and a central transverse and longitudinal hall. the second floor is the piano nobile, consisting of a 31'-11" high memorial hall with a stage on one end and a gallery on the other. See sketch plans for a more thorough description.
- 2. Stairways: Stairways are situated at the ends of the building: a grand double-flight set and a half-turn with landings at the south end and a half-turn with landings in each corner of the north end. In addition, there are straight flights between the basement and sub-basement and from the second floor to the gallery. The principal stairs are marble with a decorative iron balustrade that matches one on the exterior. Cannon are used as the newel posts. The southeast stair has the same balustrade.
- 3. Flooring: There is a variety of floor materials: concrete and wood in different parts of the sub-basement and basement; wood, tile and marble on the first floor; and wood for the second floor and gallery.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: In the sub-basement wall finishes are exposed granite along the west walls in the boiler rooms, exposed brick on interior walls and plaster in the more finished office spaces. The same finishes are found in the basement in those respective spaces. Ceilings are plaster. Wooden chairrails and baseboards are found in all but mechanical and storage spaces. Because of its function as a memorial building, the upper two floors have highly decorated walls and ceilings. Bronze memorial plaques, cannon, plaster cornices and ceiling beams fill virtually all areas of the first and second floors.

The principal room in the building, the second floor ballroom, is also decorated with giant order Corinthian pilasters, a large entablature with the names of battles, plaster caryatids, and miscellaneous trim of classical detail.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The most decorative doorway is the principal entrance to the second floor ballroom. This three door entrance on the south end of the room features four plaster caryatids that support an entablature. Original doors and transom windows exist although the former has been fitted with panic bar hardware. Other doorways on the first and second floors have heavily molded casings with flat or pedimented tops. Pocket doors are found at the entrance to the Pershing Room and between the two reception rooms. In effect, the central passage/hall of the first floor is a doorway without doors and is decoratively treated with square corner columns joined by plaster beams.
- b. Windows: In the memorial hall, the windows are at the upper level in groups of three between the colossal order pilasters. Piers with caps that support a Greek key entablature act as mullions. A similar band of windows on the north elevation is covered up behind the stage area. On the first floor, the principal windows were a mullioned tripartite group with clathri grilles at each end of the building. These have been altered due to the placement of the Pershing portrait in the Pershing Room on the north and the creation of an entrance on the south.

6. Decorative features and trim: Because of the building's nature, that of a memorial hall, there are many decorative plaques, cannon and trim. This decorative memorial work is concentrated in four principal areas: on the first floor: the south stairhall, the central passages and the Pershing Room; and on the second floor in the memorial hall. HABS photographs accompanying this documentation indicate the nature and detail of this work. A solicitation for memorial contributions regarding bronze tablets is included with this documentation. Stanford White designed the tablets that were executed by sculptor Andrew O'Connor.

7. Hardware: Much original door hardware has been removed or altered.

8. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Air-conditioning is by individual window units in the office areas. Heating is by steam radiator.
- b. Lighting: Lighting has been modernized but original bronze gasoliers are still in place in the first floor hallways, the stairhall and in the mezzanine balcony. Original globed lights are found in the Pershing Room.

9. Original furnishings: Original wooden throne-like chairs are found in the first floor hallway. Long back-to-back wooden benches still occupy the memorial hall.

D. Site:

1. Cullum Hall is situated at the east edge of the Plain, facing Cullum Road and Doubleday Field to the northeast. Because of the falling grade, the building's two basement floors are exposed on the north, east and south elevations while only the two principal floors are seen from the Plain. An access road serves the rear of the building, also serving the Officer's Mess (U.S.M.A. #603) to the south and the Bachelor's Office's Quarters (U.S.M.A. #149) to the north.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural Drawings: Original ink-on-linen drawings are in the Facilities Engineer's Office, Directorate of Engineering and Housing, U.S. Military Academy. Subsequent alteration drawings are also found there.
- B. Early views: Early photographs can be found in the U.S. Military Academy Archives and Special Collections. Some of these are reproduced in the Grashof and Lange volumes of this project.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Records, U.S. Military Academy Archives and Special Collections. See bibliographic essay in the Lange volume of this project for a listing of record groups.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Annual Reports, U. S. Military Academy

Fleming, Thomas J. West Point: The Men and Times of The United States Military Academy. New York: William Morrow & Company, 1969.

Grashof, Bethanie C. "Building Analysis and Preservation Guidelines for Category I and Selected Category II Buildings at the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York," Historic American Buildings Survey, 1983. HABS No. NY-5708.

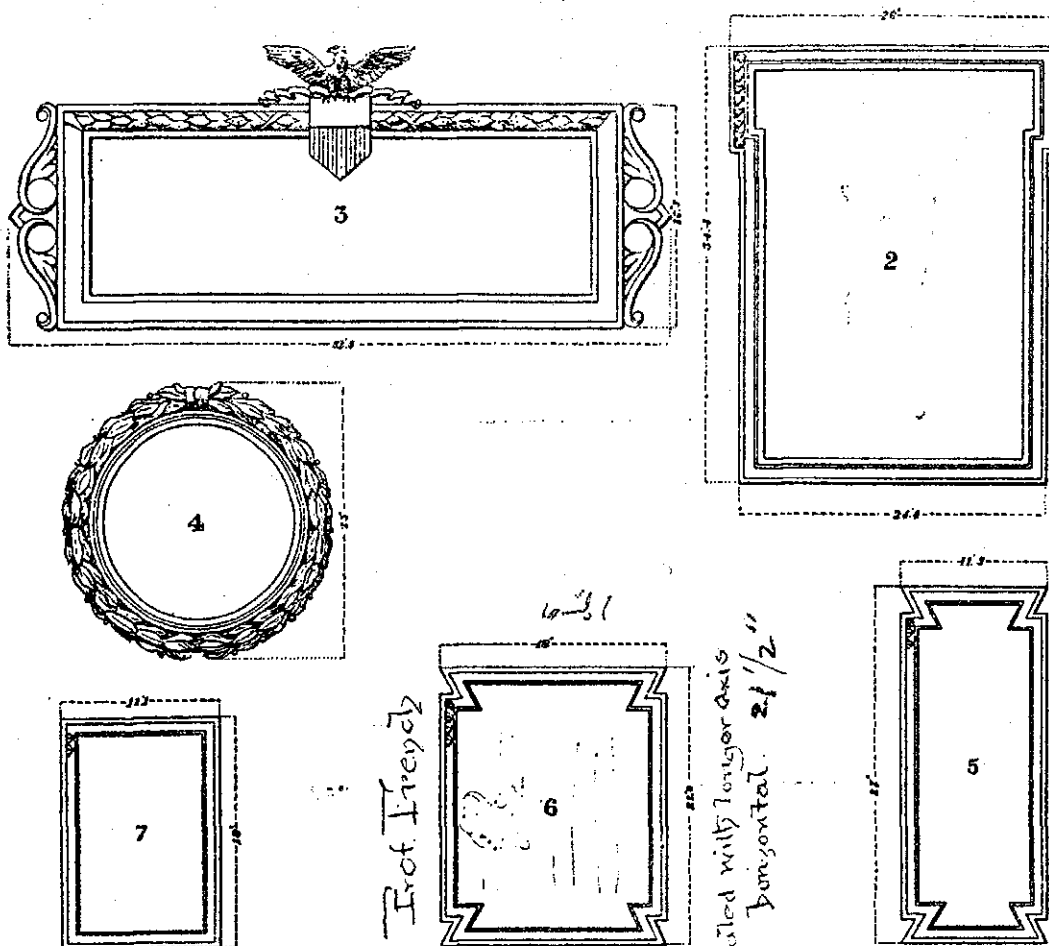
Lange, Robie S. "West Point: An Overview of the Historic and Physical Development of the United States Military Academy," Historic American Buildings Survey, 1983. HABS No. NY-5708.

D. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

The records of McKim, Mead and White.

E. Supplemental Material:

1. Description of Memorial Tablets (U.S.M.A. Archives).
2. Specifications for Decoration (Grashof).

1. Description of Memorial
Tablets. U.S. Military Academy
Archives and Special Collections.

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N. Y. STATE POINT, N. Y.

Standard Memorial Tablets for Cullum Memorial Hall.

No. 2, Cast Bronze Tablet with Inscription,	\$105.00	No. 5, Cast Bronze Tablet with Inscription,	\$52.00
No. 3, do. do.	112.00	No. 6, do. do.	60.00
No. 4, do. do.	80.00	No. 7, do. do.	40.00

For bronze portrait medallion by Andrew O'Connor add \$160.00 to cost of tablet.

THE above were designed by the Architect of the building, Mr. Stanford White, and their preparation is under his supervision. The distinguished Sculptor, Mr. Andrew O'Connor, of New York City and Paris, will undertake the medallion work for a fixed price. The entire scheme of the design and location of tablets and memorials has been carefully studied by Mr. White in consultation with the Memorial Hall Committee and complete drawings made showing the location of each. Each tablet and location is numbered, and will be assigned according to rank and services of officer memorialized determined under the provisions of the will of General Cullum as embodied in Act of Congress and orders of the Secretary of War. Checks for memorials should be drawn to the undersigned. Any of the above will be purchased and erected for the prices stated.

CHARLES W. LARNED,
Professor, U. S. M. A.,
Chairman Memorial Hall Committee.

2. Specifications for Decorations
taken from Grashof

Taken from part of original specifications.
USMA-DEH

Specification for the decoration of the
Memorial Hall at West Point, N. Y. in accordance with
plans prepared by Messrs. McKim, Mead & White, Archi-
tects, 160 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

GENERAL CONDITIONS.

The contractors are to supply all materials,
labor and implements necessary to complete the work, to
assume all risks of damage to any portion or portions
of the building and make good any such damage before
final payment is made. To incur all liability for any
loss of life or injury to any person or persons in or
about the building during the period of this contract.

All work is to be done in a thoroughly work-
manlike manner, and all materials are to be of the best
of their respective kinds to the satisfaction of and
with the approval of the Architects.

The specifications and plans are intended to
cover all necessary materials for the work complete in
all its parts and the contractor must supply anything
necessary even though not mentioned or shown, to com-
plete the work without additional cost to the Government.

The contractors are to remove all rubbish from
the building and cart the same to a point designated by
the Post Quartermaster, and leave the building perfectly
clean at the completion of this contract.

MEMORIAL HALL.

All the flat parts of the ceiling are to be
painted white, finished flat in four coats.

All the ornamental work and the mouldings of the ceiling and cornice are to be covered entirely with aluminum leaf, lacquered down to an old-gold finish and all the high lights on the ornamentation are to be touched up with gold leaf. The whole to be glazed down afterwards to an old green bronze finish and rubbed down so that the parts which have been gilded will show brighter than the rest and produce the general effect of age and softness.

The entire side walls to be painted white, four coats of oil in flat finish. The columns are to be glazed and rubbed down to an old ivory finish after having received four coats. The caps and bases and all the ornamentation of the side walls to be covered complete with aluminum leaf and lacquered down to a rich old-gold finish. All the high lights to be touched up with gold leaf and the gilding to be glazed down to a rich green bronze finish showing through as if it had been worn off.

A single line inscription in large letters is to be painted in the frieze, extending entirely around the room. The letters are to be treated so as to obtain the same effect as in the rest of the decoration. Full sized drawings for the inscription is to be furnished by the Architects.

HALLS, CORRIDORS, MAIN STAIRCASE FROM ENTRANCE DOOR TO MAIN HALL, INCLUDING THE VESTIBULE AND GALLERY.

All the flat parts of the ceilings and side walls are to be finished flat, white, in four coats of oil. All the ornamental work of ceilings and side

walls including the caps and bases of the pilasters are to be covered complete with aluminum leaf, lacquered down to a rich old-gold finish, the high lights to be touched up with gold leaf glazed down to a rich green bronze finish same as specified for Memorial Hall.

ASSEMBLY HALL.

RECEPTION ROOMS, OFFICE, BUTLERS PANTRY, SERVICE ROOMS, COAT & TOILET ROOMS OF THE FIRST STORY.

Paint the ceilings and side walls including the ornament, four coats of lead and oil, finished flat or as may be directed.

If desired the ornamental work, mouldings, etc. to be done the same as before specified for old bronze finish.

SCENE.

Furnish and set complete with all the necessary attachments for shifting the scenery which shall consist of side pieces and back with flies and drop as per detailed drawings.

The back scene to be the view looking North from Trophy Point at West Point.

CURTAIN.

Make and put up as per drawings and details, the ~~and~~ silk "antique" valloours curtains with all trimmings, fringes, etc. and with all the necessary accessories for the drawing and closing of the same.

Feb 4
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Approved
Ref. to
Secretary

Alfred H. Hovey
W. H. Hovey
3. *H. H. Hovey*

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation is part of a multi year project sponsored by the National Park Service and the United States Military Academy explained in HABS No. NY-5708, Volume I, "Methodology." This written documentation was prepared by Travis C. McDonald, Jr., architectural historian, in 1982-1985 based on fieldwork conducted in 1982.